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Senators Take Closer Look

The Budget for Foreign Policy

By Murrey Marder

NOTHING CAPTURES the attention of federal policy makers so quickly as laying a hand on their supply of money. So when the Senate Foreign Relations Committee began hearings recently for the first time on the State Department's budget there was considerable interest in the government and in the press.

To strike sustained sparks of headlines in a congressional inquiry, however, there must be at least two adversaries to rub together. At the end of the first morning's hearing, therefore, when affable Secretary of State William P. Rogers finished an untrying appearance in which he displayed no desire to quarrel with anyone, especially presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger, most of the broadcasters, cameramen and writing press packed up and left.

There were glum looks around the State Department where morale is decaying even faster than usual since the President's China mission underscored so publicly what has long been so evident: that the most dramatic foreign policy ventures will continue to be run out of the White House through the Kissinger apparatus and that Rogers, in a Harry Truman phrase, will "not fuss" over it—at least not publicly and visibly.

Rogers, in a recent press conference and in the Senate hearing, was consistent in his insistence that he does not feel excluded from anything, that "the system is working very well," that "the foreign policy is very effective," and that in any event it is President Nixon, not Kissinger nor Rogers, who "makes foreign policy."

Even though Rogers may be, as he said, "perfectly satisfied" with his role, the Foreign Relations Committee chaired by Sen. J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) is not. Fulbright and his fellow critics who have engaged in an intermittent struggle with two administrations over the shaping of foreign policy have no personal quarrel with Rogers, a longtime friend of Fulbright's and other committee members. However, they see their own power eroded by state's lack of combativeness in asserting its officially proclaimed "primacy" in foreign affairs.

The nub of all this is that the Fulbright committee's functions are derived primarily from legislative jurisdiction over the State Department. As state's influence in the process shrinks, so does the committee's. It has watched the shrinkage with chagrin since President Nixon's decision in 1969 to put Rogers, one of his oldest friends, at the top of State rather than an activist, ambitious, foreign policy professional, and to keep full control of foreign policy initiatives in the White House, with Kissinger as his conceptualizer, most-immediate adviser, director of a National Security Council staff that has grown greatly in size and power, and even, as it has developed, supreme secret envoy.

Kissinger occasionally has met with Foreign Relations Committee members at Fulbright's home and elsewhere—and plans to

again. But he is beyond the Committee's official reach, across the dividing line of "executive privilege" that presidents invoke to prevent advisers from testifying before Congress.

One unannounced purpose of the budget hearings was to explore whether Kissinger in his NSC capacity, might be drawn across the "executive privilege" divide to testify before Congress by reaching for him through the National Security Act of 1947 which set up the NSC.

Fulbright asked Rogers, a former attorney general in the Eisenhower administration, if he believed Congress intended the National Security Council to assume the role it now has in foreign affairs. Rogers said he did, that the NSC was intended as "a forum for presenting different views," with the actual "decisions" made by the President. Fulbright, however, thinks that Kissinger's operation has reached a scope never imagined by Congress.

That issue was not pressed very sharply in the recent hearings, but it is being pursued more openly by the Federation of American Scientists, who note that some presidential advisers who wear several functional hats do testify before Congress in capacities apart from their confidential relationships with the President.

What the Fulbright committee focused on most in two succeeding days were State Department budget statistics. But there was an underlying motive there too. For the same reasons that its influence is linked to the State Department's power, the committee is hardly likely to use a meat-axe on State's \$563 million budget for 1973. It would be skinning its own interests.

Until this month, the Foreign Relations Committee never held authorization hearings on a State Department budget, not even in the so-called "great days" of the post-World War II era, when Republican Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan and Democrat Tom Connally of Texas teamed in bipartisan harmony with the Truman administration to reconstruct Western Europe, build NATO and "contain" the Soviet Union. Fulbright, then a young and enthusiastic supporter of that Establishment philosophy, has come full circle on most of its premises.

The "great days" label was really a tribute to the Senate committee's acquiescence and cooperation with the Truman administration's plunge into what Fulbright sees now as imperialism, rather than an accolade for the committee's independence or competitiveness. The committee in those days was the junior partner of the Executive Branch, not a challenger.

It was normal practice then for the Executive Branch to quietly provide drafts of committee members' speeches; even drafts of committee reports. Vandenberg and Connally, insistent on being privy to the "take-off" of policy, were granted apparent co-pilot status by an administration anxious for their support.

When Fulbright, midway in the Johnson administration, turned rebel over the Do-

minican intervention and the Vietnam war, relations between the Executive Branch and the Foreign Relations Committee, which Fulbright now has headed longer than any other Senator, spun into reverse. His committee was treated as hostile; to borrow the euphemism that the Nixon administration concocted in Indochina, the Executive Branch's relations with the committee often amount to "protective reaction": each often fires on the other preemptively, on the assumption it will be attacked.

To compete in the foreign policy arena, the Fulbright committee has stretched its imagination and resourcefulness. It has sent its own staff investigators abroad, spotlighting many U.S. involvements and commitments never acknowledged in official public records; it has left a rebellious mark on many pieces of legislation, notably on the conduct of the Indochina war, and the committee now has put before the Senate a major bill based on the work of Sen. Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.) and others, to curb the President's authority to use troops in war without congressional authority.

The Nixon Doctrine's low posture, and the opening to China, are directions in which Fulbright and his colleagues pointed long ago; but they want to move much faster and farther to wrap up the cold war and U.S. involvement overseas. Last year, the committee hit on the device of attaching a rider to the foreign aid act, requiring the approval of the Senate Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs committees of the annual budgets for State and the United States Information Agency. These budgets previously were subject only to clearance by appropriations committees, unlike the budgets of Defense and many other departments that regularly are examined in both ways.

The first round of this new approach now has been played out in the budget hearings. One thing they showed was that most senators were surprisingly unfamiliar with routine day-to-day operations of the State Department or State's relationship to the complex NSC structure that Kissinger controls. The bulk of foreign policy is not high-wire diplomacy, but increasingly, trade, aid, economic rivalry, technology, legal disputes, military weaponry, international conferences, and the like.

In theory, through its examination of State's budget, the committee, as Fulbright expressed it, can "further the process of restoring Congress' proper role in the making of foreign policy."

Fulbright's committee now has acquired the capacity to influence the priorities of State's spending. But that budget is one of the smallest in the federal government; even in embassies overseas, State Department employees represent only 16 per cent of all embassy employees, with the remainder assigned by Defense, AID, CIA, or other agencies.

Furthermore, budget work is tedious business, and attendance of Senate Foreign Relations Committee members at hearings is already woefully spotty. At this point, the committee's latest departure in its search for a more novel but unproved.

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